

A

LETTER

TO

Father Lewis Sabran

JESUITE,

In Answer to his LETTER to a PEER

OF THE

Church of England.

WHEREIN

the Postscript to the Answer to *NUBES TESTIM*
is vindicated.

And F. SABRAN's Mistakes further discovered.

LONDON, Printed for Henry Motlock at the Phoenix
in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1688.

Imprimatur,

A Letter to Father *Lewis Sabran*.

Guil. Needham R^{mo} in Christo
Nov. 25. P. D. Wilhelmo Archiepif-
[1687.] copo Cant. a Sacris Domest.

Reverend Sir,

Since I am altogether a stranger to that Honourable Person, to whom your Letter is dedicated, I would not presume to write my Vindication to his Lordship, but thought it more proper for me to address this to your self.

What I put down in a *Postscript* in relation to your *Sermon* at *Chester*, hath I perceive, given you no little disturbance. I do not wonder at it, since few men are content or able to bear the justest censure that can be cast upon them.

But tho' I do not wonder at your displeasure, yet I do very much at your attempt to vindicate your self in a matter that is not capable of any defence, as I shall quickly shew you.

I intend *this Letter* for a Vindication of my self to the world, as well as to you, and therefore will take leave to repeat what you said in *that Sermon*, and what it was that I animadverted upon in my *Postscript* to the *Answer* to the *Nubes Testium*.

In the second page of your *Sermon* you have these words, *If I presume not to present them, [yours and your Auditours Prayers] without taking along the joyn't Intercession of the Mother of God, I follow therein the Advice of St. Augustin, which I address to you in his words, Let us by the most tender Application of our whole heart, recommend our selves to the most Blessed Virgin's Intercession; let us all, with the greatest eagerness, strive to obtain her Protection; that whilst with Assiduity we pay her our Devotions on Earth, she may intreat for us in Heaven by her earnest Prayers; for undoubtedly she who brought forth the Price of Redemption, hath the greatest Right to intercede for those who are redeemed.*

This was the passage that I reflected upon there, since with a very little pains I found that that Sermon out of which you quoted these expressions, was not St. Austins, and therefore I said in that Postscript that I could not but conclude you guilty either of great Ignorance, or of notorious dissingenuity, who would ascribe to the venerable Sr. Austin this Notorious Forgery.

These Expressions of my *Postscript* I do still own notwithstanding your Vindication, and intend *this Letter* for a Defence of them, and a full Confutation of what you have so weakly and so unwarily offered towards the clearing of your self.

You have prefaced your Letter to that Honourable Lord with some

Hard words against the Church of England about her Reformation by *meer Lay-Authority*, about her want of *Succession*, *Mission*, and about her *undermining* one third part of the *Apostles Creed*. I am so very desirous to come to the *Controversie* betwixt us, that I will only tell you here, that every word of what you have said there against the Church of England is very false, and very absurd.

You next make *two or three Reflections* upon my Answer to the Compiler of the *Nubes Testium*; I will pass over these at present also, since I am not at leisure here to defend that Book, and which is more, I need not against what you have said there.

You next come to the Dividing of my *Accusation* against you, and tell the World, I accuse you first of *Ignorance* in saying, you followed the Advice of *St. Austin*, when you recommended your self to the Most Blessed *Virgins Intercession*.

In Answer to which I must tell you, Sir, that you abuse my words in dividing them into the charge of *Ignorance* about Using the *Intercession* of the Blessed Virgin, and *Disingenuity* about quoting the *Sermon* as *St. Austins*. Your design I easily foresee, which is to draw me into a *Controversy* about *Invocation of Saints*, that so the heavy charge laid against you may be either dropt, or buried in a multitude of words about other things.

But to be plain with you, Sir, now you have drawn me into the field, I am resolved not to be diverted with the throwing in of other matter about *Invocation*, which I have sufficiently answered once already in my Answer to the Compiler of the *Nubes Testium*: I am resolved to finish this dispute about the *Sermon* of *St. Austin*, before I begin any other with you; When you have either cleared your self, or owned your *obstinate Mistake*, then I shall be at your service either in the *DEFENCE* of my Book, or of my Mother the *Apostolical Church of England*.

You must not be angry therefore if I throw aside as nothing to the purpose of the present *Controversy* what you have set down out of the *Nubes* from your third to your sixth page, where I was glad to find that you did recollect with your self that our dispute was about those words as taken out of the thirty fifth *Sermon* de *Sanctis*: Which I said could not be *St. Austins*, but you are now resolved to defend that it may.

Astor my Arguments; you tell his Lordship that I borrow some Proofs, of this *Confident Assertion* [I suppose you mean of the *Sermons* not being *St. Austins*] of *Alexandre Natalis*, and add one of my own contrivance.

Since I am not acquainted with that Honourable Lord, I am afraid you will not do me the favour to tell that Lord from me, that what you say here is very false. I designed and drew up that Postscript, and had it

Printed

Printed in half a day; I had not lookt into *Natalis Alexandre* of five weeks before, and which is more, neither looked for, or ever saw one syllable in him about that, or any other Sermon attributed to St. Austin that I remember. I must own that I have been acquainted with *Natalis Alexandre*, but it was merely to find out the stealings of your *Fions* and Learned Author of the *Nubes Testimonium*, who as I have shewn in my Answer, did not only steal his whole Book, (excepting a small passage or two) out of that *French Historian*, but stands excommunicated by this present Pope for his pains,

After your false account whence I had my Proofs, you come next to examine them singly.

My first was that the Title, a Sermon on [not in as you translate the words] the Feast of the Assumption does not at all agree to any thing that is near St. Austins time.

You answer that there is no consequence can be drawn from the Title, since the Title (as I suppose your meaning is) might have been afterwards added. But why, Sir, can there be no consequence drawn hence; my design was not only from there being no Feast of Assumption then (which you grant) and therefore no Sermon could be Preached on that Solemnity, but from there being no belief of such an Assumption then, and therefore a Sermon on that subject, which this evidently is, cannot be either St. Austins, or near his time, since there was then and long after not only no Feast, but no belief of any such thing as the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. But you endeavour to illustrate this shadow, or rather phantome of an Answer by an Instance. You tell his Lordship St. Austins fourteenth Sermon de Sanctis is allowed by all to be his genuine work, the Title whereof, is in the Feast of all Saints; yet that the Institution of that Feast was much later than that Sermon, which was made for, and preach'd in the Solemnity of a Virgin and Martyr.

Surely Sir, you thought your putting your name and your society to your Letter would fright the nameless Author, from daring to give one word of Answer to that Letter, and therefore that you might take the Liberty to say what you pleased in it. Without such a supposition, I am not able to rescue you from a more odious Character, than I am willing to mention: For this is one of the falsest passages I have met with in so few words. You say St. Austins 14th Sermon de Sanctis is allowed by all to be his genuine work: This is (give me leave to speak out) very false: For the Benedictines of Paris (not to mention our Authors, whom I will not insist on to prove against your ALL,) have thrown this Sermon into their (a) Appendix as Spurious, and shew that it is a meer cento, made up of pieces of Sermons, borrowed here and there. You tell his Lordship next,

(.) Appendix
ad Tom. 5.
1. August.
p. 316.
Edit. Paris
that 1683.

that the *Title of the Sermon*, is in the *Feast of all Saints*. This is as false as the other; for not onely in the *Louvain*, but in the *Benedictine*, as well as in *Erasmus's Edition*, the *Title of this fourteenth Sermon*, is in *Festo Conversionis Sancti Pauli*, a *Sermon on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul*. I must confess Sir, that I was wholly astonished at your asserting these things with so much assurance to a Peer, and to a Peer also of the *Church of England*, and without any truth: I lookt again and again at it, and lest it might be an error of the Press, I lookt into the *fourth*, into the *twenty fourth*, into the *thirty fourth*, into the *forty first*; I lookt also into the *two next Sermons* before and after this *fourteenth Sermon de Sanctis*, but no news could I find of your *Title* in any one of those *Sermons*, and therefore must lay this mistake to your own charge.

You lastly tell his Lordship, that this *fourteenth Sermon* was made son, and preach'd in the solemnity of a *Virgin and Martyr*; which is as false as either of the other, since it certainly was made for, and preach'd upon *St. Pauls Conversion*.

You next tell his Lordship of a far greater mistake in this my Objection, much to be wondered at in so great a pretender to reading, as if (say you) *Feast, or day of Assumption in the Writings of Antients, did almost ever signify any thing else but the Day of a Saints Death*.

But pray, Sir, what is that to this *Sermon*, if the day of *Assumption* do not ever signify the day of a *Saints Death*, why may not this be the exception? but to pass that; you know very well that that cannot be the meaning here, since this *Sermon* speaks of *Assumption* of the *Blessed Virgin*; and that it was the *Churches Custom* to believe that the *Virgin Mary* was on the day of that solemnity assumed into *Heaven*.

But all this is but to raise a dust about nothing, for were the Argument from the *Title* as weak as you could desire, yet what follows in my *Postscript*, is more than strong enough to convince all reasonable men that that *Sermon* could not be *St. Austins*.

I next urged against this *Sermon*, that the *Benedictines of Paris* in their late Edition of *St. Austin* had cast it into their Appendix as spurious, and that they told us that in their *MSS.* it wanted the name of any Author; but that the *Divines of Louvain* told us that in several Manuscripts, which they used in their Edition of *St. Austin*, this *Sermon de Sanctis* was intitled to *Fulbertus Carnotensis*.

This Argument you were afraid to take together and therefore without saying a word to the *Benedictine Manuscripts*, which name no Author for that *Sermon*, you think you answer the *Louvain MSS.* about its being intitled to *Fulbertus*, by saying *St. Ambrose and Chrysostom's Sermons* have appeared in *MSS.* under other Authors names. But pray, Sir,

what would you prove from hence, because such a thing hath happened to St. Ambrose, therefore this Sermon must be St. Augustins, because printed among his works, tho' it bears not his name either in the MSS. used by the Louvain Divines, or by the Benedittines. How is it that we know one man's Sermon's from another's, is it not either from his style, or from its being attributed to such a person by the most and best Manuscripts? from one of these ways it is that St. Ambrose's or any other Father's Sermons are vindicated to their true Authors. But both these Arguments are directly against this Sermon's being St. Austins; the style is dull and heavy, hath not any thing like or near the briskness, wit, and great sense of St. Austin; and further the MSS. used by them, give it against you, they either intitle it to no Author, or to Fulbertus Carnotensis.

Tho' my Arguments were not very weighty, yet what I next urged I thought would fully satisfy any ones scruples; I mean the instance of Isidore being quoted in it, by which I said it was certain that this Sermon must be written after his time who lived in the beginning of the Seventh Century.

What I say is certain here you tell his Lordship is improbable. You give this as one reason, because the Author of that Sermon says no Author among the Latins could be found, who treating of our blessed Ladies Death had been positive, and express; whereas Gregory of Tours in the Sixth Age hath a most full account of our blessed Ladies Assumption, and therefore the Author of this Sermon must have lived before Gregory, and consequently long before Fulbertus, or Isidore of Sevil. But I do not see this Consequence, it is no error to suppose the Author of that Sermon had never seen Gregory of Tours Book, and therefore might have that expression concerning no Latin Author treating of the Virgin Maryes Assumption: Or we may very well suppose that if he had, he reckons his story among those Apocryphal ones which were then writ, but rejected by the Church of God: And I cannot see how it should be a fault in Fulbertus to reject Gregory of Tours (if he knew of him) as an Apocryphal Author, and not in St. Bernard, who so very long after either doubted or disbelieved (as you own in the page before this) the Story of the Assumption, notwithstanding the most full account of it in Gregory; whom (with the Author of this Sermon) he either did not know, or did not regard.

Your Answer about St. Isidore is very strange, since tho' there were never so many Isidores before St. Austin, yet can you, or dare you offer to shew that any of them were Writers? But to drive you from this weak hold, we are certain that the Isidore quoted here is he that lived in the seventh Century. If you did look into the Louvain Edition when you wrote your Letter, you could not have mist seeing what book of his the passage is taken from.

But I am afraid, Sir, I have to do with one, who is resolved to carry things by his own wild guesses more than by examining things fairly. The passage in the Sermon is in *Isidor's Book de Vita & Morre Sanctorum*. (8) So that all your dreams are vanished; and this one passage enough to have answered your whole Letter. I shall therefore be shorter with the rest, and tell you that your sleighting the Judgment of the *Louvain Divines*, and the present Learned *Benedictines* at *Paris*, especially when invincibly strengthened by this passage from *Isidore*, and your believing this Sermon to be *St. Austins*, because *Thomas Aquinas* believed it to be his, discovers (pardon the expression) a very unbecoming obstinacy; You cannot but have heard how little a *Critic Monsieur Launoy* hath shewn *Aquinas* was, what forged Authorities he used and urged as from *S. Cyril of Alexandria*, whereas there was no such things in his works. This instance, which you make use of for your defence, is an evidence as well against him as you, however far more excusable in him than in you, since he lived in such times of Ignorance, and you in times so learned; I am very confident that had he seen how much is now said against this Sermon, he would have been far from acting like you, or have been obstinate in the defence of such a noted forgery.

I have but room left to tell you that the *Louvain Divines* are of no Authority with me except where their reasons are apparently good; and therefore should they have asserted the 18th Sermon de Sanctis to have been *St. Austins* (as you say they do) I should not upon good reasons assent to them; but that what you say here is false, is evident from that note set by them before this Sermon, that some attribute this Sermon to *Valentinus*; and the *Benedictines* of *Paris* are so far from your words, that they say the *Louvain Divines* leave it as DUBIOUS: And they for their parts have call it into the Appendix as Spurious, and give this reason for it among others, that it is the work of some ignorant botcher, who hath patched it up out of stolen Sentences: So that your quotation for Invocation thence ought to be sleighted by that honourable Lord as much as your other in the Sermon before the Court at *Chester*.

Thus, Sir, I have given you the trouble of a Letter; if you intend further Vindication of your self, pray oblige me so far as to hasten it out, that so I may stay no longer for it, than you have done for this. One thing you may oblige me in further, and that is not onely to quote, but to look into those Authors you make use of. This will prevent the multiplying of the Controversy; tho' you be resolved to continue this any longer against

Reverend Sir your Friend
in all Christian Offices.

FINIS.